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Outcome of the Workshops and Decision of the Final Forum

Final Forum: Ideas, Suggestions, Criticism

The forum followed an open discussion format with moderation, involving all participants to reflect upon the content and the program of the events. The paragraphs below follow the chronological order of the discussions as they happened, rather than a structured format.

The main aim of this event in Lesvos was to limit the panel format to focus on the workshops for concrete proposals and actions; panels were designed to serve as an introduction to organizations participating, where the workshops would focus on preparing concrete action plans for the themes selected. However, organically, the outcome was that the events in Lesvos served as an introduction. In contrast, the events in Izmir will serve as the platform for concrete actions.

Panels involved valuable information that was to be shared, surely. However, not all the workshops were well designed in terms of identifying the participants or bringing the organizers together beforehand. The main matter that the organization wanted to avoid in the first place was not to let practitioners from one field (i.e. lawyers on law) be left alone, but rather to mix fields within the workshops to allow them to strategize together. Some of the workshops did not manage that; therefore creating a participant list beforehand was a technical proposal, as well as identifying the organizers as early as possible for them to get together and design the content of the workshops better.

Our initial idea to produce a collective text at the end of the event was switched with the commemoration for Pylos Shipwreck and rather decided to be spread over time so the organizations can get to know each other's work better first and provide a narrative on a minimum common, in line with a common strategy. Two quick proposals were [to update the existing report of ELDH, jointly prepared with CHD and OHD, "What Safe Country Are They Talking About?"](#), and translate existing legal text such as [Know Your Rights handbooks of LCL](#), [CHD's migration policy analysis](#), and [Migration and Asylum Commission's rights violation reports](#). These texts can be useful to establish that minimum common and pave the way to a commonly written text in the future. The existing webpage of the Mediterranean Network Of Rights will also



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be utilized to upload these translations. All of these matters were tabled to be discussed in Izmir.

Directly or indirectly, almost all the participants touched on the importance of communication. Although so far an existing mail chain and some online meetings were the tools to organize the Lesvos side of the events, it was discussed that for future collaborations different mediums should be established. Other than the existing communication line, dividing the participants into working groups, organizing online events until the Izmir event (and beyond), conducting podcasts, utilizing a digital cloud for collective work that is accessible at all times, and using Google Docs before/during/after the events were the mediums that were proposed by several different participants.

The importance of sharing experiences from different countries and settings was very considerate for most participants. Meanwhile, some raised concerns about the lower numbers of participants from Greece and overall from Europe. A couple of logistical matters have been given to explain this: the two main dynamics were **a)** the obvious population difference between Turkey and Greece, especially in the civil society field, and **b)** the remoteness of Lesvos for European or Greek organizations, as opposed to organizations coming from Turkey. All participants agreed that the richer the number of organizations (especially from different countries), the better the outcome of the events: Therefore for the Izmir event better coordination will be needed. Also, it is important to protect the cross-border, transnational character and aim of these events.

One of the key criticisms that the events received was also the lack of time. The content of the events was very full, and 3 days were not enough without rushing any of the events. Therefore the immediate proposal was to spread the events for at least 4 days, which was accepted. Punctuation to the meetings was also mentioned, where most activities couldn't start on time due to participants being late. It was collectively agreed that this will be paid attention to in Izmir. An important reason why the events were designed for three days was the logistical element: the ferry schedule between Izmir and Lesvos was the main parameter for arranging the days of the event, and the availability of the participants did not necessarily coincide with this schedule. Delays at the border control also led to rushing most people arriving from Turkey to be taken straight away to the event venue, without giving them much



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chance to rest. The upcoming event and transportation possibilities to Izmir are far larger, therefore the logistical organization is hoping to overcome this obstacle in the future.

The historical population exchange between Greece and Turkey which was enforced 100 years ago was also mentioned during the events. History of the state-enforced migration could be looked into. The [ongoing podcast series of Memory Center and Legal Centre Lesvos, "Crossing the Aegean"](#) was given as an example.

Some participants also mentioned the lack of information/presentation of the work of participating organizations in Greece (mainly, Legal Centre Lesvos). Although printed material was available, panels only involved Europe-based organizations in the later hours, which were cut short due to the rental hours of the venue. More attention will be given to finding ways to reflect and express the work of all participating organizations in the Izmir event.

The events wanted to foster participation as much as possible. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the panels were designed not to involve Q&A sessions, rather they will serve as introductory sessions of organization and will shed light on the topics that the participants wish to discuss in workshops. Still, criticism arose regarding this practice; some participants stated that different means of engagement could have been found during panels and that such tools exist. Collecting the questions on a Google Doc or using web-based platforms such as Padlet to collect comments will be considered in the upcoming events in Izmir not to abandon panels altogether, but to create a space for engagement during the panels.

One of the most important and concrete outcomes of the events was the proposal and the formation of the working groups. Thematic working groups were proposed and among them, 8 were picked. The list and the description of the working groups can be found below. These working groups will share the labor of organizing the Izmir event, plus will have tasks dedicated to them to undertake until the next event and beyond. Participants will be assigned to these working groups depending on their interests and initiative.

The dates of the Izmir event are being discussed; late September to the whole of October has been picked as an interval initially. A Doodle form has been created to have a reference point for the availability of participants. A



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pre-coordination meeting was held with the delegates of the organizations, together with individuals who showed interest in participating in the organizational labor of the event. The majority of the participants are available on the dates between the 14-28 October. The activities so far were set for 4 days, Monday to Thursday; however, some feedback suggested that maybe at least a day should be set during the weekend. This should be discussed collectively.

Creating a hybrid attendance system for those who wish to join online was also discussed. This demands infrastructure, labor, and attention surely, however, if we realize that key participants cannot partake due to unavailability, it should be considered. This consideration should also involve how publicly available we wish the events to be.

Reflecting the situation of the civil society organizations in Greece, depoliticization and NGOization were mentioned as two challenges that outgrew strong political work or movement lawyering, at least in the legal aid organizations. The invited organizations do share a political stance, therefore it would be important to learn the practices that are very frequently utilized in Turkey and to see how they can apply to a collective struggle on the rights front.

One thing that also was discussed, bittersweetly, was that so many organizations active in migration got together in Lesvos. Whereas in Turkey there is not much communication or coordination between them. Thus, it is important to consider the Lesvos events as a milestone that corresponds to a need for collaboration; not only on a cross-border level, but also within the individual countries.

An additional matter that was brought into the consideration of the organizations is to set up international training programs and potential exchange programs on an institutional level. Training can involve the legal framework and its applications to asylum law in both countries, EU and national laws that criminalize migrants, or policies that are followed to incarcerate migrants. The exchange programs can allow young lawyers to partake in internships on both sides of the Aegean border, to have a holistic idea of border management and international/refugee law. Through bilateral agreements or memorandum of understanding, organizations involved in this



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scheme can also provide a stronger case for visa applications for candidates, especially now that is becoming harder and harder to obtain.

Formation of the Working Groups

1) *Anti-racism and Anti-fascism Subgroup*: Discussion within workshops 1, 4, 7, and 11 came out with a need to create a working group that can focus on a common text, as well as organize a similar yet larger forum of exchange.

The text will aim to outline a minimum common that all organizations can agree upon, yet will avoid depoliticized language and will keep an anti-racist and anti-fascist perspective. It will also identify the political links between Turkey and Greece, especially on their migration policies and the subsequent effects of these policies.

It will try to describe a common front of struggle that collectively involves migrants and locals. It was also discussed that the text would focus **i)** on countering the narrative of the description of the “Far-right”, **ii)** on having a self-critical language on the absence of a counterpower and how that counterpower can be established, and **iii)** on how these series of events can be developed into a platform of struggles against the practices of the status quo.

The forum of exchange is yet to be described: however, workshop 11 came out with a strong sentiment of involving a larger forum with more participants and a longer time for discussion.

Overall, participating organizations/individuals agreed on several perspectives, yet felt inclined to involve everyone in the debate which was not possible. The format of this forum will be decided and will be included in the program outside of the panel or workshop format.

2) *Communication Subgroup*: This working group was decided as a natural need at the end of the event during the closing forum. However, certain shortcomings of the existing communication lines also brought attention to improvements.



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Therefore the subgroup will be responsible for developing a diverse form of communication by utilizing different tools and mediums. The baseline of communication will be the existing e-mail chain, which will be supported with online meetings on a rotational delegation level (meaning, organizations sending delegates to carry information back and forth). Beyond, public online events will be organized, and supported with simultaneous translations until the events in Izmir. Podcasts will be developed to allow organizations/individuals to amplify their voices on matters related to their work or on topics that they wish to draw attention to. The existing web page of [the Mediterranean Network of Rights \(MEDNR\)](#) will be utilized as an up-to-date platform for info dissemination. It will also work on translating and publishing the work of participating organizations to EN - GR - TR.

The communication subgroup will also be responsible for keeping individuals and organizations informed on the overall progress of the upcoming event(s) and will act as a medium for participants who wish to contact each other. It will also be responsible for developing the translation infrastructure, media presence, and overall visual/audial dissemination of the events.

3) *Feminist and Queer Approach on Migration Subgroup:* Workshop 2 and 5 have been reserved specifically to focus on gender and its links to migration. The positive feedback that emerged from these two workshops, which followed each other back to back, also gave birth to the proposal of establishing a working group dedicated to deepening the discussions that took place during these workshops.

The notes of the workshop will not be incorporated into this report but rather will be shared internally within the participants due to the concerns of anonymity and confidentiality. Therefore the Feminist and Queer Approach on Migration Subgroup will inform the rest of the participants on the work of the subgroup on a specific rhythm and will organize similar workshops for the upcoming event in Izmir.

The Subgroup will act as a bridge between the two events, especially for those communities who cannot/couldn't travel between Greece and Turkey. One key component of the Subgroups is also to produce audio material such as a podcast on a specific topic within this theme, drawing inspiration from the presentation of the Lesbos LGBTQI+ Support Solidarity Network, where a majority of the participants of the assembly decided to send voice recordings to be presented to the audience since their identity couldn't be revealed



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publicly (due to the conditions that they face in the island, especially in the camp on gender based violence).

4) Culture and Arts Subgroup: Workshops 6 and 9 hosted people who focused on civil society and the role of culture and arts in it as a tool of expression and impact. Several conversations hit the limits of the travel restrictions and freedom of movement for migrants in Turkey and Greece, and the inability to bring them physically together, allowing them to self-organize, and create political actions and strategies together.

Having in mind all of the organizations are in touch with migrant communities, several ideas and projects were proposed where culture and arts can be utilized to allow that connection where “physicality is currently not possible”. Kırkayak Culture’s extensive work on bringing migrant communities together, along with the accumulated experience on this theme in Lesvos opened up several doors and eventually led to the proposal of creating a working group that will focus on developing these ideas into executed projects.

The Subgroup will start with contacting migrant communities in touch with the participant organizations/individuals and enable them to speak to each other by facilitating an online gathering, collecting shared thoughts, and seeing how they can be materialized through the medium of culture and arts. Materialized work can be presented during the Izmir event and can be further evolved into a larger series of exhibitions hosted in Greece and Turkey.

5) Camps, Incarceration and Confinement Subgroup: Workshops 4 and 7 specifically focused on the incarceration of migrants as political hostages throughout the globe and wished to work on the methods implemented to make migrants invisible.

Several matters were discussed from legal loopholes to racial profiling, from mob attacks to crackdowns, which portrayed the framework of need on such a topic.

This subgroup will produce an agenda that includes camps and prisons as a tool of discipline and invisibility, weaponization of precarity and time, deployment of racial profiling and hate speech as a form of deterrence, and will develop an agenda on how to resist collectively to these policies of punishment. Subsequent examples from Turkey and Greece on policy and



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resistance will also be identified and brought to the attention of the network/platform through this group.

6) Labour Subgroup: Labour was a very essential element in all the discussions within the workshops and panels. The lack of comprehensive analysis of migration through the scope of labour, exploitation and capitalism was brought up several times as a criticism towards the existing civil society and political movements. Therefore a labour subgroup was proposed to involve the topics within the scope of the future events and beyond.

Several unionization examples in Turkey and in Greece were brought up, as well as existing unions that have an agenda regarding migration. Therefore the working group will focus on developing an agenda for the events in Izmir, will contact unions, labour groups or political associations that are involved (especially organizations self-organized by migrants), will develop ideas to incorporate labour to the discussions, and will identify links of political intersection between the themes that were cardinal for the Lesvos events such as gender, migration, and law.

7) Coordination and Organization Subgroup: To divide and collectivize the labor of organizing the upcoming event and coordinating between participating individuals/organizations, identifying future partner organizations, and widening the outreach of the network, a Coordination and Organizations Subgroup was proposed.

This subgroup will consist of at least one delegate from each participating organization, as well as individuals who voluntarily wish to partake for coordination purposes. The working group will not act as a mechanism of decision-making, but rather as a body to inform the network on proposed decisions, distribute tasks, collect information and ideas from organizations to bring it to the interest of the subgroup, and overall will foster collective and participatory processes for the future events.

This involves locating venues for events, arranging logistical details (travel arrangements, accommodation, visa procedures, etc.), processing proposals for the future, and acting as a unit to oversee equal and transparent participation of organizations and individuals in the developed network.



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8) Policies Subgroup: The event was considered a “Year Zero” for a future platform or network. The form and the function of these entities were not decided, but to start developing an internal code of function a Policies Subgroup was proposed.

The Policies Subgroup will collect the ideas and the discussions throughout the events and will try to build a framework of policies for the function of the future platform/network between the participants. This involves officializing the organizational form of the platform/network, the realization of proposed practical mechanisms between legal aid organizations against border violence between Greece and Turkey, as well as developing tools for the political agenda of the platform/network such as decision-making, method of organization, participation, political aim and strategy, outreach and audience.

With this in mind, the Policies Subgroup will develop key bullets to bring into the interest of the participating individuals/organizations' template policies and evolve the templates into a statute of operations in cord with the feedback that the participants provide. These policies in the long run can act as the governing body of the platform/network or can only stay as consultable measures.